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RETNS ATTENDANCE STRATEGIES

In Rathfarnham Educate Together National School we value the individuality of all our children and respect their right to access all areas of learning. We work to enable them to develop the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes that are necessary for their self-fulfillment and their development into active and responsible adults.

Rathfarnham Educate Together National School reviewed its attendance and punctuality strategies because:

- Punctuality is a priority area identified by staff
- It is a requirement under Education Welfare Act 2000

Aims

In Rathfarnham Educate Together National School we aim:

- To foster an appreciation of learning
- To raise awareness of the importance of school attendance and punctuality
- To enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development
- To promote positive attitudes to learning
- To ensure that the Code of Behaviour is implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourages children to attend school
- To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000/Guidelines from TUSLA.

Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. However, staff remain vigilant so that 'at risk' children are identified early. Staff have identified the need to raise awareness of the importance of punctuality in our school.

Strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality

- Caring Environment - We aim to ensure that children are taught in a safe secure, caring and nurturing environment where their intellectual, physical, moral and spiritual development are catered for at all times.
- We try to create a welcoming environment for pupils and parents. Teachers consistently model and try to encourage good attendance and punctuality in their respective classrooms.
- Additional Needs - children needing support are identified as early as possible and the appropriate support systems put into place. We emphasise positive achievements and do all we can to enhance self-esteem.
- Lunches - Emergency breakfasts and lunches are always available if required. These measures enhance the school experience for those children who might otherwise be at risk of poor attendance.
- Communication – Parents/guardians are reminded regularly of the importance of good attendance and punctuality (i.e. newsletters, school website, progress meetings, school reports etc.). An awareness of the importance of punctuality by the children is kept to the forefront in the classroom and at assemblies and children are encouraged to pass the messages on to parents.
- Assemblies – children are reminded of their responsibilities in getting themselves ready for school on time, not delaying the family, etc.
- Walking Bus initiative – children need to arrive at their 'bus stop' on time before the designated 'driver' for the week leaves. *

Support of Parents/Guardians

It is the policy of Rathfarnham Educate Together National School to encourage and maintain open communication between home and school and to encourage parents/guardians in their role as primary educators of their children. The Principal and teachers are available, on an appointment basis, to meet parents where there is a difficulty with attendance or punctuality

The importance of good attendance and punctuality is one of the issues addressed at meetings for new parents/guardians when their child is enrolled in Rathfarnham Educate Together

National School and their attention is drawn to the requirements of the Education Welfare Act. It is also covered in the information pack given to all parents of Junior Infant children.

At the beginning of each school year, all teachers hold a general meeting of parents/guardians and one of the issues addressed is that of the importance of regular school attendance and punctuality.

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- supporting the school's attendance strategies
- ensuring regular and punctual school attendance
- notifying the school through Aladdin Connect if their children cannot attend for any reason
- working with the school and education welfare service to resolve any attendance problems
- making sure their children understand that parents support good school attendance
- refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time
- showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework
- encouraging children to participate in school activities
- praising and encouraging their children's achievements
- instilling in their children a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth
- ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc) are arranged for times outside of school hours
- contacting the school promptly, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters
- notifying the school by e-mail if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher
- co-operating with the school in ensuring that in the case of collecting a child before the end of the school day, parent/guardian signs the child out at the school office. Teacher on yard duty is also notified if child is collected during yard time and class teacher is informed by the school secretary.

School Records

Attendance

A roll call is taken every day and should a child be absent, the teacher is informed through Aladdin Connect. The Education and Welfare act 'obliges the parents of an absent child to notify the school of the cause of absence not later than the third day of absence'. Notes or record of non- attendances are duly dated and kept. Unexplained absences are followed up by the class teacher.

- When a teacher is concerned about frequent unexplained absences, the teacher informs the deputy principal, and/or the principal. The deputy principal/principal contacts the family to ascertain reasons for the absences.
- When a child has missed 20 days, the absence is reported to EWO/Tusla as required by the Education Welfare Act. If the absenteeism persists, the school requests active intervention from the EWO.

Punctuality

School begins at 8.50 am*. All children and staff are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act to report children who are persistently late to the EWB.

Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance

Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), states that 'the parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognised school on each school day'.

Section 21 of the Act obliges schools to inform the Education Welfare Officer if a child is absent on more than 20 days in any school year, or if a child does not attend school on a regular basis.

The focus of the work of an EWO is around the educational welfare of the child and on ensuring that concerns and problems are dealt with before school attendance becomes a crisis issue.

However, if a parent/guardian doesn't work with the EWO to address the problems around school the EWO has the power to take legal action against the parent/guardian under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.

Taking legal action against a parent or guardian is a very serious matter and may involve the parent/parents being taken to court. It is an action of last resort when all other offers of support have failed and the parent or guardian has not supported the plan developed with the EWO.

Imposing a sanction on parents or guardians for non-attendance is the responsibility of the local District Court Judge in each case having heard all the evidence including that of the EWO and the parent/guardian.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to Tusla twice during the school year through an online system. Each child's attendance is communicated to parents/guardians on their end-of-year report card.

Further information is available in Don't Let Your Child Miss Out (Leaflet for parents NEWB 2004) http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/EW_parents_leaflet_english.pdf and through the school newsletter and parent/guardian information on our school website.

Further information and support is also available at:

<https://www.tusla.ie/tess/information-for-parents-and-guardians-tess/education-welfare-service/protecting-a-childs-right-to-education/>

This Statement of Strategy for School Attendance was approved by the Board of Management on 8th November 2021

* Some school activities are subject to change or cancellation during the COVID period. See the COVID Response Plan for any changes.